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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the present shelf arrangement of instructional materials in the Curriculum Materials Center (CMC) located in Swirbul Library on the Garden City, Long Island campus of Adelphi University. The CMC is a special library resource supporting the curriculum of the School of Education at Adelphi, and graduate and undergraduate students preparing for careers as teachers are its most frequent users. It is an area that houses items quite different from the usual library collection, and the display and organization of these items offer special challenges to a librarian. Some of these challenges are related to the tension between the purposes of curriculum centers and the organizational schemes of libraries, of which they are a part. Background information is provided about curriculum centers and library organization to allow for better understanding of the reasons for changing the shelving of the nonprint materials in the CMC from the traditional library arrangement to a bookstore type of display. (Author/AEF)

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Meeting Student Needs:

Bookstore Display in a University Curriculum Materials Center

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Introduction

This paper describes the present shelf arrangement of instructional materials in the Curriculum Materials Center (CMC) located in Swirbul Library on the Garden City, Long Island campus of Adelphi University. The Curriculum Materials Center is a special library resource supporting the curriculum of the School of Education at Adelphi University, and graduate and undergraduate students preparing for careers as teachers are its most frequent users. It is an area that houses items quite different from the usual library collection, and the display and organization of these items offer special challenges to a librarian. Some of these challenges are related to the tension between the purposes of curriculum centers and the organizational schemes of libraries, of which they are a part. It will be helpful to have some background information, both about curriculum centers and library organization, to better understand the reasons for changing the shelving of the nonprint materials in the CMC from the traditional library arrangement to a bookstore type of display.

Curriculum Materials Centers

The first such special facility in a United States institution of higher learning was the Textbook and Curriculum Service Library in Western Michigan State College, established in 1922, followed by the Bureau of Elementary Research at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1924. In 1967,the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in Standard VI of the Standards for Accreditation of Teacher Education (as cited in Ellis, 1969, p.9) called for the establishment of an area open to students and maintained by a knowledgeable faculty member in which instructional materials would be available. In the 1986 NCATE Standards, Procedures and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Education Units, the criteria for accreditation which deals with equipment, materials, and supplies stated, "There is an identifiable and relevant media and materials collection accessible for use by education students" (NCATE, p. 43). The desire to satisfy the criteria is an impetus to the maintenance of curriculum centers for students preparing to become teachers.

The Curriculum Materials Center Collection Development Policy (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 1993) states the objectives of this resource in its Model Policy:

1. The Curriculum Materials Center (CMC) supports the education curriculum of the college/university, particularly the methods and practicum courses, and those children's and young adult literature courses taught at the institution.
2. The CMC makes readily available for inspection, evaluation, and use educational materials…for use with children from preschool through grade twelve (p. 1).

Toifel (1992) stated that respondents to a questionnaire designed to gather information about curriculum materials centers indicated that the most important service rendered is making available the curriculum materials with professional reference and advisory service as the second most important service. A review of the literature confirms that an essential service of curriculum centers is the support they provide for the teacher education program.

Reporting on a survey of directors of centers, Buttlar and Tipton stated, "In spite of the important role that curriculum material centers …play as sources of instructional materials and teaching activities, relatively little is known about them" (p. 370), and McGivern (1988) concluded that they were "discouragingly hard to compare with one another"(p.125). The 278 institutions in the United States and Canada listed in the fourth edition of the Directory of Curriculum Materials Centers (Anderson, 1996) are illustrative of center varieties and the difficulties of comparison. They report varying collection sizes, materials, locations of facilities, budgets, and staffing. The collection may be gathered in one room, shelved in different areas of a library or may be located on campus but in a facility separate from the library. Some centers house a special collection within this special collection, and some offer production facilities. Names include Curriculum Resource Center, Instructional Resource Center, Learning Resources Center, Curriculum Library, Curriculum Collection, Education Resources, Instructional Center, Instructional Materials Center. The questionnaire used to gather this information recognized that:

> There are many variations on how curriculum materials are organized, ranging from an easily-identifiable center known perhaps as a Curriculum Laboratory or Instructional Materials Center, to the other end of the spectrum

where materials are fully incorporated into a larger library collection (p. 149).

This collection, so helpful to future teachers, is one of print and nonprint items. The former might include representative samples of textbooks through grade 12, curriculum guides in all subject areas, children's books, fiction and nonfiction, bibliographies of children's literature, pamphlets, samples of lesson plans, and commercially prepared books for the practitioner. Some centers incorporate periodicals and others have a test collection. But, it is the nonprint materials used by classroom teachers that most distinguish a center's collection from the other holdings of the academic library. These include, but are not limited to: audiocassettes, compact discs, videocassettes, filmstrips, 16 mm films, slides, records, maps, globes, charts, pictures, prints, diagrams, models, blocks, toys, musical instruments, kits, manipulatives, realia, and computer software. The Curriculum Materials Center Collection Development Policy (ACRL, 1993) notes that "materials come in a variety of formats which may be different from other…academic library materials…" (p.1) and that this difference allows for specialized services. The curriculum center, however, is still very much an integral part of the library collection.

Curriculum Centers as a Library Resource

Curriculum materials gain in value as part of an academic library collection. They are the more useful since, as a part of circulating holdings, they may be checked out with a library card for examination and use at the convenience of the borrower. Students have the opportunity to try them in a classroom for demonstration to fellow students, or the borrower may use them with children if student teaching or working in a school. Students often work with a group and can bring their selections to any setting where the group chooses to meet. Many students commute to and from campus, have full and part time jobs, have family responsibilities, take evening courses, and frequently have little free time to try out materials in the center itself. The option to remove materials from the library and use them when most convenient and in situations that are most meaningful is very important both to the student and to the profession. Retail outlets and catalogs serving educators offer an interesting and tempting assortment of possible acquisitions, an array which underscores the importance of offering students the ability to view, select, and use an item so that they may assess its strengths and weaknesses, determine if its use is successful in meeting the lesson's objectives, and decide if their selections are comfortable to work with before committing their own or taxpayers' funds to a purchase. To the availability of a curriculum center of classroom tools is added the

assets of library privileges and services: the development, organization, storage, and maintenance of the collection, and professional advice in the selection and use of the materials. The value of this collection as a library resource cannot be overstated.

A major responsibility of most libraries is making their collection available, and this is usually accomplished by organizing holdings so that they may be easily and efficiently retrieved. The scheme of organization generally used by public and school libraries is the Dewey Decimal System, while most university libraries use the classification scheme of the Library of Congress; both are devices for shelving. The latter system assigns an alphanumeric call number to the item, which then acts as its address so that knowing the call number helps in locating it. As the items are shelved sequentially by letter and, within letters, by number, and since the assignment of class numbers is based upon the subject of the item, browsing in a discipline is facilitated as books of the same or similar subject are physically together. The holdings of the library are listed in a catalog, and retrieval of its (and therefore the library's) contents may be through author, title, subject, or other entry. Computerized catalogs permit browsing by call number as well as through other access points unavailable with a card system. Whatever the system chosen by a particular library, classifying and then entering the items in a listing that is readily available to the public and easy-to-use should assist searchers in the process of material identification and location.

The Curriculum Materials Center at Swirbul Library

Swirbul Library uses the Library of Congress Classification Scheme for its collection, including the holdings of the Curriculum Materials Center. The circulating books in the general collection are shelved sequentially on a series of stack levels. Shelves around the periphery of one stack level were made available for the CMC print collection while the nonprint items were placed in a small room close to but on a different level from the books. These books, when processed, are given a descriptive location of Text, Curriculum Guide, Activity, Juvenile, or Juvenile Reference. This location is placed above the call number and indicates to the shelver and searcher that the book is not with the general collection. It also acts as a finding aid when searching in ALICAT, the Adelphi Library online catalog. For example, a student searching for a children's book in a particular subject will use ALICAT to bring up titles on the specified subject and then, by limiting these titles to the juvenile location, will retrieve the records of children's books the library owns that have been cataloged with that subject. The student can then get the selections

by going to the stack level where Juveniles are shelved. When the nonprint items are processed, they are given material designations such as chart, flash card, realia, or game. There are 27 material type limiters in ALICAT and these sometimes present problems to searchers. A student has to know the subject of a search and the specific type of material to which to limit the search. In addition, although many of the retrieved records are descriptive, they may not adequately describe the item or suggest the uses to which the item or parts of it might be put. There may be a poster in a kit that would be helpful for a particular lesson, but this is not apparent from the record. The best way to fully appreciate the potentials of the various materials is to visit the CMC room to examine and to try them.

As a rule, students came directly to the CMC to search for materials and to request assistance in selection and use. When the room in which the nonprint items are stored was set up, materials were organized on the shelf by format and then by call number within format unless the shape and size of something prohibited shelving it thus. When a student came to ask for a videocassette by call number, retrieval was a simple process as the videos were together in sequential order on the shelf. The process was not much different from that of the retrieval of a book from the shelf. Unfortunately, this ease of access was not duplicated with the bulk of the collection. This was due, in part, to the nature of the students' requests, the discrepancies between call numbers as assigned by the Library of Congress scheme and subjects as they generally are taught in a school setting, the shelving by format, the nature of the items, and how some items were packaged.

The concerns of the students frequently centered on the following:

1. Preparing discipline based lessons
2. Preparing interdisciplinary units
3. Preparing multi-disciplinary lessons integrated by theme
4. Teaching reading and writing skills across the curriculum

They wanted ideas for lessons, units, themes, methods, and strategies that were applicable to subjects as organized in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. For example, a social studies class might study global communities from geographic, historic, social, and political perspectives. These related disciplines, brought together in the classroom, were not necessarily together in the Curriculum Center because the sequential shelving of materials by Library of Congress call numbers sometimes caused a

separation in subjects that would not exist in the classroom. Shelving by format further compounded this problem.

The following sequence might occur with material designated "realia" when shelved by call number: a box of plastic coins for use in mathematics lessons, magnetic alphabet letters, a set of rhythm instruments, a clock stamp for mathematics. A shelf of a different material type, "flash cards," might have these boxes next to each other: money cards, alphabet cards, science tasks cards, cards identifying times of the day. Not only might the classroom subjects be separated within a format, but they also could be repeated each time a new material type designation began. Relevant materials might be scattered on the shelves, and that necessitated searching in several different places in the room to be sure all possibilities were found. Moore (1997) states that it is "library wisdom that the more times a collection is divided, the harder it is to find a particular items (sic) because there are more places to look and to forget"(p 259). This was sometimes the case in the Curriculum Materials Center, making comprehensive and efficient access difficult.

The nature of the items and the way they were packaged presented other problems. Kits generally have several components, some of which may be different in format. One large and heavy carry case held, among other things, puppets, audiocassettes, posters, a timer, a bucket, plastic chips, and pictures. The difficulty was twofold: items that might be of interest were hidden in the case, and students were reluctant to check out the bulky case if they could use only one or two parts of the kit. A few ideas seemed worth trying. If the items were removed from their containers and packaging and openly displayed, students could select the individual pieces they needed, the materials would be better utilized, and an item might not have to be purchased if it were already part of a kit. Another thought was to examine critically these separate components with an eye to placing them in more suitable and convenient locations. And more suitable and convenient meant organizing the materials as they might be in a classroom setting.

Learning centers are popular in the elementary grades. A center may focus on a specific skill, concept, theme, activity, or subject area, and relevant and enriching resources would be gathered there and available for teacher and learner. An area where children explore phonics might have magnetic alphabet letters, sentence strips, letter stamps, vowel flash cards, rhyming pictures, and any other supportive materials. In a more traditional classroom setting, the teacher might find that setting up materials by

curriculum areas, such as putting all social studies materials together, was a practical and comfortable organizational scheme. A different organization of materials in the Curriculum Materials Center was implemented.

Items are now organized so that materials that would be used together in a classroom are together on the shelves. There are sections for the different subject areas, and within these areas items are further organized, perhaps by concept, theme, or use. Thus, materials that might be of use in a mathematics lesson where learners explore measurements are shelved together, and many items have been removed from their boxes. A student coming into the CMC to find materials to help in the preparation of a lesson on telling time would see a shelf with clock stamps, models of clocks, a sundial, an hourglass, a kitchen timer, and a quartz timer, all openly displayed, the packages they came in discarded. Some items, like the time--related games, filmstrip, and flash cards are still in their original boxes, but they too are on this shelf. The kitchen timer came from a completely dismantled kit whose other contents now are placed in more meaningful settings and may be individually borrowed. Format and call number are ignored but by glancing around the room, students can easily locate the areas they need. This organization by subject or theme with items openly displayed is more akin to a bookstore's arrangement by genre and subject than it is to the shelving scheme of a library.

Moore (1997) contrasted the objectives of bookstore owners with those of libraries and made the assumption that the arrangement in bookstores of books by genre "reflects the system that best enhances sales and profits--and pleases customers" (p. 254). A measure of success in a business venture is profit, but Moore makes the point that there is "no clearly defined unit of success" (p.254) in a library. One measure used by libraries is the number of times an item has circulated, and researchers studying the relationship between book displays and circulation generally conclude "that books displayed circulate significantly more than books not displayed" (Long, 1987, p. 150). Goldhor (1972) studied the effects on circulation of books displayed in a prime location and stated, "Public librarians have long known from experience that certain devices will measurably increase the circulation of books to adults…" (p. 387) and that one such device is placing them on display. Further research has added support to the observations of librarians.

Clark (1982) has noted that:

Curriculum materials cannot be organized on the shelves in quite the same way

> as general monographic and periodical collections of the library are handled. Their arrangement for browsing and service requires a set of criteria which differs from the emphasis on subject and author involved in handling other library materials. The curriculum materials center becomes a special library within the general library system regardless of its location (p. 17).

The acknowledged primary goal of the Curriculum Materials Center is to make available to students the tools of instruction, which comprise its holdings. The criteria for availability must be geared to the needs of the students, and access to the collection must be the most practical and useful. The present arrangement of materials in the CMC by school subject and theme is more successful in meeting student needs than the original shelving by call number and format. In this special library within a library, this bookstore type of display takes precedence over the library's systematized shelving.

Is bookstore display something other curriculum centers might try? I think the many positive experiences in the Curriculum Materials Center at Swirbul Library should encourage other center librarians to rethink their organization scheme. Access to holdings is easier and more efficient when students can see possible answers to their needs collected together, and students using the center seem quite comfortable with shelving by subject. Comments from librarians and faculty have been positive and the open display has intrigued casual visitors to come into the CMC. Making the contents of the many boxes and kits visible makes the room colorful, cheerful, and inviting and money is saved when the contents of a kit can be used separately and purchase duplication is avoided. The student assistants who have worked in the CMC have had little trouble adjusting to this arrangement; they quickly pick up the placements and are quite efficient in directing students to the different curriculum areas. Their previous school experiences seem to have given them a foundation for this ease of direction and retrieval.

In 1992, Henderson and Barron noted that "the traditional curriculum materials center (CMC) that serves teacher education programs has not changed significantly since its inception in 1922" (p.254). They suggest that "librarians…critically examine the role and aims of the CMC in meeting the demands of the 21st Century educators" (p.254). A critical examination of the organization and shelving of the collection may also be in order.

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